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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MAAMA 002067

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H PASS FOR SENATOR NELSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTEROREP](#) [BA](#) [REGION](#) [OFFICIALS](#)
SUBJECT: SENATOR NELON AND CROWN PRINCE DISCUSS REGIONAL
ISSUES

* Missing Section 001 *

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Withdraw Troops from Iraqi Front Lines

¶7. (C) Senator Nelson asked te Crown Prince for his views on the situation inIraq. The CP replied that the GOI had to addres four main issues: de-Baathification, which had goe too far and was too harsh; distribution of oilincome; federalism, specifically, whether Iraq could be composed of three or 18 regions; and disrming militias. He suggested that the U.S. withdraw troops from the front lines and consolidate is forces so as to take fewer casalties. The security situation would likely decline, but this would force Iraqis to take on a greater measure of the security responsibilities themselves and look to their neighbors for support. The U.S. could intervene if necessary. This situation is preferable to the U.S. "half committing" to providing security in Iraq or increasing the number of U.S. troops in the country.

¶8. (C) The Senator reported thatSaudi Arabia supported fixing a timetable for a complete pull-out of U.S. forces as a means to encourage Iraqis to work together. The CP said that this was not enough and would not work. He recommended that the U.S. draw down to about 50-60,000 troops, which would serve as a rapid reaction force. He thought GCC countries would probably support a U.S. rapid reaction force in Iraq, and they might even contribute troops if Iraq requested them to do so.

¶9. (C) The Crown Prince said that what the United States tried to do in Iraq was very hard and the U.S. had underestimated the difficulties. Iraq will never be a model for democracy in the region. The United States should empower PM Al Maliki, but it cannot do it alone. The U.S. should get Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and others to help.

Iran the Greatest Long-Term Threat

¶10. (C) Switching gears, the Crown Prince said that the U.S. cannot confront Iran while it is tied up in Iraq. Iran represents the greatest long-term threat in the region. It

wants to develop long-range ballistic nuclear missiles. A project like this requires the resources of a state behind it, and goes well beyond what a group like Al Qaida could do.

The Senator asked the Crown Prince his view of whether Iran might take offensive action against oil interests. The Crown Prince responded that "rationality is overrated," particularly if the Iranian regime feels its entire existence is threatened. They might try to take down as many others with them as they could. Additionally, Iran could try to stir up trouble inside the GCC, for example in Bahrain and Dubai. The CP said that Bahrain is interested in pursuing an integrated air and missile defense system with the United States and other GCC countries to harden its defenses against Iran.

11. (C) The Senator asked Shaikh Salman his thoughts on the possibility of a terrorist attack on an oil tanker. The CP responded that some extremist groups are perpetuating a cult-like philosophy that glorifies death. These extremists can never be brought into the mainstream. A tanker going down is not a strategic issue, but it highlights the need for alternatives to shipping oil through the Strait of Hormuz. The region also needs a way to react quickly to an environmental incident. Bahrain worries about something happening at Iran's Bushehr reactor that results in the contamination of Gulf waters. Bahrain obtains 70 percent of its potable water through desalination, and it cannot afford to face the disaster of radiated Gulf waters.

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